

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 3588

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, VT
SUBJ: VATICAN INQUIRY ON NATURE OF VICE-PRESIDENT MONDALE'S
VISIT

FOR UNDERSECRETARY HABIB AND ASSISTANT SECRETARY HARTMAN ONLY

FROM AMBASSADOR LODGE'S OFFICE (SARROS)

1. MARCH 4 WE RECEIVED A LETTER FROM THE VATICAN SUBSTITUTE
SECRETARY OF STATE BENELLI. MONSIGNOR BENELLI WISHES TO KNOW
WHETHER QUOTE THE RECENT VISIT OF VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE
WAS CONSIDERED AN OFFICIAL VISIT EITHER TO ITALY OR TO THE
HOLY SEE OR TO BOTH. UNQUOTE

2. WHILE WE COULD REPLY WITH THE ACTUAL LANGUAGE USED IN
ANNOUNCING THE VISIT, E. G. "WORKING VISIT," YOUR GUIDANCE
AND THAT OF AMBASSADOR LODGE SEEMS DESIRABLE. THIS IS A
NOVEL AND INTRIGUING QUERY. THE VATICAN COMMUNIQUE FOLLOWING
THE VISIT STATES THAT THE POPE RECEIVED THE VICE PRESIDENT
"IN A PRIVATE AUDIENCE." THIS TERMINOLOGY IS SIMILAR TO THAT USED
FOR PRESIDENT FORD'S VISIT JUNE 3, 1975. IT CONTRASTS TO THE
CHARACTERIZATION GIVEN TO VIP VISITS FROM COUNTRIES HAVING
DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE VATICAN. THUS, THE NOVEMBER 20
VISIT OF THE PRESIDENT OF VENEZUELA WAS TERMED AN "OFFICIAL
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VISIT."

3. THE QUERY THEREFORE SHOULD BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED. IT MAY
BE THE POPE'S WAY--NOT BENELLI'S, BECAUSE BENELLI IS ALWAYS
FORTHRIGHT WITH US--FOR OBTAINING MORE INFORMATION ON THE NATURE
OF OUR PRESENT RELATIONSHIP.

4. WHILE WE HAVE BEEN INFORMED THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD DECIDED TO CONTINUE THE PRESENT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE VATICAN, WE DO NOT KNOW THE TERMS IN WHICH VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE CONVEYED THIS TO POPE PAUL. DAVID AARON (NSC) WAS PRESENT AT THE PRIVATE AUDIENCES AND MIGHT BE IN A POSITION TO PROVIDE THIS INFORMATION. (THE VISIT ITSELF WENT VERY WELL. THE VICE PRESIDENT WAS IMPRESSIVE AND THE VATICAN WENT BEYOND ITS CUSTOMARY RULES TO HONOR HIM--THEY GRANTED PROTOCOLARY HONORS USUALLY RESERVED FOR HEADS OF GOVERNMENTS AND THEY MADE MANY EXCEPTIONS REGARDING PRESS COVERAGE, EVEN ALLOWING TELEVISION CAMERAS IN THE POPE'S LIBRARY.

5. YOUR GUIDANCE IN REPLYING TO MONSIGNOR BENELLI'S LETTER WOULD BE APPRECIATED. BEAUDRY

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